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PORTUGAL

The Portuguese Armed Forces Movement has announced its intention to remain active in Portuguese politics following the election of a civilian government later this year.

The announcement, which followed a 12-hour session on Monday of the 200-member Armed Forces General Assembly, was vaguely worded, but appears to preserve the Movement's present dominance of the political scene. Movement spokesman Vasco Lourenco told reporters that the Movement would be more than a "referee," but that it did not intend to install a military dictatorship. Lourenco indicated that the Movement would keep its existing powers, including ministerial posts, after a civilian government is elected later this year. Details of the Movement's plan will not be released until the matter has been discussed with the three political parties in the governing coalition.

The military's role in Portugal's political future has been the subject of heated debate for several weeks. Various factions differ over the degree of power the Movement should exercise and for how long. More radical officers want it to have the right to intervene directly in the affairs of a civilian government and to veto any legislation that is counter to its interests. Moderates prefer to follow the original program of the Armed Forces Movement, providing for the military's return to the barracks after a civilian government is elected, or guiding a civilian government until the political parties gain enough experience to take over.

The three coalition parties are divided over the Movement's position. The Communists, hoping to gain from their influence within the Movement and doubting their ability to do well in elections, have already applauded its decision to retain a post-electoral role. The Socialists and center-left Popular Democrats, who hope to set up a European-style civilian democracy, support the continuing influence of the Movement in politics,

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but they believe the military is usurping too much power. They are especially wary since the Movement pushed a constitutional amendment through the legislative Council of State last week to expand the powers of the military junta. This law is widely interpreted as giving the Movement a means of bypassing civilian opposition in the cabinet.

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ETHIOPIA

Eritrean guerrillas launched two new attacks on government positions in Asmara last night. The area around the US consulate and the US navy's Kagnev station appear to have been special targets. No American casualties have been reported.

The consulate general suggests that the insurgents may have misinterpreted a recent visit by an aircraft of the US military assistance advisory group. The aircraft, which was carrying communications gear, classified pouches, and mail, may have been considered the first stage of a US effort to bring ammunition to Ethiopian units.

Demonstrations against the insurgents and in support of Ethiopian unity took place in Addis Ababa again yesterday. Demonstrators criticized "foreign intervention" in the insurgency, a reference to the support most Arab states give to the predominantly Muslim guerrillas. In a rare public appearance, Major Mengistu, one of the military council's leading members, addressed the demonstrators in front of the council's headquarters.

The demonstrations were organized by the military council, disregarding charges by Arab and Muslim delegates at the meeting of the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa that earlier demonstrations were anti-Arab in character. It takes little effort on the part of the military council to unleash a strong latent feeling against Muslims among the Ethiopian Christians who live in the highlands around the capital.

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PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN

Pakistan's relations with neighboring Afghanistan, which have been poor for over a year, are worsening as a result of Islamabad's actions since the bomb explosion that killed Prime Minister Bhutto's chief political lieutenant in the North-West Frontier Province.

The killing of provincial Home Minister Sherpao on February 8 has triggered a new round of Pakistani claims that the Afghans are involved in violent subversive activities in Pakistan. Although no one has yet been formally charged with Sherpao's murder, Islamabad has been alleging that Kabul, together with the Afghan-supported National Awami Party in Pakistan, is responsible.

The Afghans and the Awami Party deny the Pakistani accusation, as they have denied similar charges following other bombings in Pakistan during the past year. Kabul gives sanctuary to some members of the Awami Party, but we have no independent evidence to support Pakistani claims that the Afghans train and equip Pakistani subversives.

Since the Sherpao killing, Bhutto has taken a series of steps to suppress the Awami Party, which is Pakistan's largest opposition group. His government has outlawed the party, arrested over 500 of its leaders and adherents, confiscated its property, and rushed through new legislation expanding the government's power to detain political opponents, including members of parliament.

Bhutto has also acted to tighten his control over the frontier province. On February 17, he placed the province under direct central government rule, scrapping the pro-Bhutto provincial coalition government in which Sherpao had been the dominant figure. The crackdown in the frontier province could stimulate a rise in violent activity by some of the Awami Party's more radical supporters there who have escaped arrest. The government can count on the support of the army, however, and appears strong enough to maintain its authority in the province.

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The Afghans will probably counter Islamabad's allegations against them with a new round of verbal blasts about what they view as Pakistan's suppression of its frontier tribes. These people are ethnically more closely related to the Afghans than to other Pakistanis.

Both countries will try to keep their relations from deteriorating to the point of war. Afghan President Daoud knows that Pakistan's army is much stronger than his own. He presumably realizes Afghanistan could not count on its Soviet or Indian supporters to intervene militarily in his behalf, although they would probably provide diplomatic and material support. The Soviets and Indians reportedly have counseled him in the past to avoid conflict with Pakistan.

Daoud well remembers, moreover, that Pakistani-Afghan friction in the early 1960s helped bring about his fall from power in 1963 and subsequent ten-year political eclipse. Bhutto, for his part, knows that hostilities with Afghanistan would be expensive and could interrupt the steady progress he has been making in consolidating his hold over the country. Pakistani-Afghan hostilities could also disrupt the process of reconciliation with India, that Bhutto values at this time.

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PERU

In his first speech since the civil disturbances in the Peruvian capital on February 5 and 6, President Velasco lashed out at the leaders of Peru's largest political party on Monday. The President blamed the party and other "counterrevolutionary elements" for the rioting that left scores dead and extensive property damage in Lima.

The American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, the country's only large, mass-based political organization, is a frequent target of the government in times of domestic unrest, but the volume of the current criticism suggests that the government is contemplating some action against the party. APRA has remained strong during more than six years of military rule, and any harsh crackdown almost certainly would cause further public unrest.

For the time being, heightened unrest would not threaten the regime because the military retains a monopoly on power, and the armed forces probably are united on the need to curb the party's popular appeal.

For the longer haul, however, the government probably believes it will need organized political support, and Velasco may now decide to create a civilian-based organization in support of the military-led revolution.

Such a move would be risky because of strong differences in the regime over the ideological bent such a movement should have and over who should organize and staff it. Two newly formed leftist, pro-government groups are already jockeying for support of various ministers and military leaders. President Velasco and other officials will have trouble directing these groups and preventing them from building independent power bases.

In his speech on Monday, Velasco also leveled a thinly veiled attack on the CIA. The attack was standard fare for Velasco and most likely meant for domestic consumption, although it reflects continuing strong suspicion within the government of US interference in Peruvian affairs.

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It is still unclear how the recent domestic disturbances have affected Velasco's standing in the military. The armed forces still seem united behind him, but there are indications Velasco is under fire for his handling of the disturbances and some of his lieutenants may be sacrificed in the coming weeks.

Newly installed Prime Minister Morales Bermudez apparently was not involved in the military action that resulted in civilian casualties. He may emerge in a stronger position.

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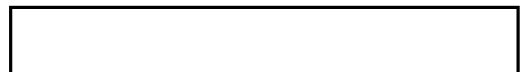
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